

Institute for
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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Academia Christiana: a Marriage of the Catholic and the Extreme Right



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IERES Occasional Papers, no. 18, February 2024
"Transnational History of the Far Right" Series

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TransHistFarRight

TRANS HIST FAR RIGHT

Transnational History of the Far Right
A Collective Research Project led by Marlene Laruelle

At a time when global political dynamics seem to be moving in favor of illiberal regimes around the world, this research project seeks to fill in some of the blank pages in the contemporary history of the far right, with a particular focus on the transnational dimensions of far-right movements in the broader Europe/Eurasia region.

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In December 2023, the French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin announced that he had presented the government with a shortlist of far-right organizations to be banned, a process whose outcome is still pending.¹ Prominent among the shortlisted organizations is a hitherto little researched group called Academia Christiana (AC), a far-right and Catholic fundamentalist organization founded in 2013 that provides both ideological and militaristic training. Branding itself “Catholic and identitarian,” AC serves as a catch basin for individuals with a monarchist, neofascist, and religious fundamentalist background, and attempts to fuse those hitherto largely separate constituencies into one Christofascist movement.

Academia Christiana’s Activism

AC’s activities are guided by a group of Catholic fundamentalist clerics who are predominantly members of the Institute of the Good Shepherd (Institut du Bon Pasteur) and the Priestly Society of St. Pierre (Fraternité Sacerdotale Saint-Pierre, FSSP)—both direct offshoots of the Christian fundamentalist Society of St. Pius X (SSPX). They all belong to the far-right fringe of the Catholic Church that rejects the liturgical reforms of Vatican II and continues to celebrate the Latin (Tridentine) Mass, also embraced by AC.²

AC is led by its founder Victor Aubert, who teaches French and philosophy at the FSSP-run Institut Croix des Vents.³ A stalwart of the Latin Rite, and often appearing in military garb, he embodies the Catholic soldier that AC seeks to engender.⁴ AC’s vice-president since 2013 is Julien Langella, who in

¹ “Gérald Darmanin va demander la dissolution de l’association Academia Christiana,” *Le Monde*, December 10, 2023, https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2023/12/10/gerald-darmanin-va-demander-la-dissolution-de-l-association-academia-christiana_6205059_3224.html.

² Academia Christiana on Twitter, August 15, 2023, <https://twitter.com/AcademiaChristi/status/1691379803922849792>.

³ Victor Aubert describes himself as the founder and president of AC, and so does the organization, while various secondary sources have labeled Julien Langella as the founder. See: Victor Aubert on Twitter, accessed January 26, 2024, https://twitter.com/Vic_Aubert; “Academia Christiana - Colloque Regards Croisés Sur Notre Identité - Victor Aubert,” Academia Christiana on YouTube, November 3, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MP1_XdxEx7I; “Victor Aubert,” LinkedIn, accessed September 29, 2023, <https://fr.linkedin.com/in/aubertvictor>.

⁴ Academia Christiana on Facebook, June 8, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/AcademiaChristiana/photos/pb.100064559837295.-2207520000/5265552926866445/?type=3>.

his youth was drawn to the far-right monarchist Action Française. In 2011, he was among the co-founders of Génération Identitaire, the French branch of the identitarian movement.

An earlier version of AC's website, before it was recently scrubbed of much of its controversial content, listed more than 50 lecturers, among them ten clerics as well as several known far-right figureheads.⁵ They include Renaud Camus, the creator of the Great Replacement theory; François Bousquet, editor-in-chief of *Éléments* and director of the Parisian bookstore and publisher La Nouvelle Librairie; and Jean-Yves Le Gallou, the co-founder of AC's Christofascist sister organization, the Institut Iliade. Furthermore, Academia Christiana has associated with two militant neofascist organizations, Bastion Social and L'Alvarium, both of which have since been dissolved by the French government. The two are offshoots of the Groupe Union Défense (GUD, 1969-present), arguably the largest and most important militant far-right group in France.

AC founder Victor Aubert described the organization as a “conservative ‘think tank,’ a training institute and a network of initiatives,” offering “courses in philosophy, history and practical training as well as political reflection in the form of lectures and open forums.”⁶ That this also entails physical and militaristic training becomes apparent when looking at photographs taken at numerous AC camps, which show its militants improving their hand-to-hand combat skills or engaged in endurance training.⁷ Pictures taken during a summer camp in Sées, France, in August 2017, even show AC members visiting a shooting range.⁸

Since its inception, AC has continuously grown and expanded its scope of activities. While cadre training has always played a preeminent role, AC has focused strongly on outreach in recent years, and has also made forays into publishing. The organization has developed an extensive web and social media presence which features well-produced video clips, articles, and an ever-growing event schedule.⁹ Although formerly mainly active in the Pays de Loire region, AC is now organizing events throughout France in the form of conferences, lecture series, summer schools, camping and hiking trips, and annual celebrations (St. John's fires, Oktoberfest, etc.). Victor Aubert stated that over 4,000 young people have successfully completed AC's training program and that between 200 and 500 people attend any given event.¹⁰

In its attempt to fuse monarchist, neofascist, and Catholic fundamentalist ideological elements, AC promotes the work of a variety of far-right ideologues from the past and present, exemplified by

⁵ “Intervenants,” Academia Christiana, archived copy from October 26, 2023, <https://web.archive.org/web/20231026170650/https://www.academiachristiana.org/en/intervenants>

⁶ “Don't Just Criticise, Create! : Interview with Victor Aubert, Director of Academia Christiana,” Academia Christiana, March 13, 2023, <https://www.academiachristiana.org/en/post/don-t-just-criticise-create-interview-with-victor-aubert-director-of-academia-christiana>.

⁷ Academia Christiana on Facebook, August 27, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/AcademiaChristiana/photos/pb.100064559837295.-2207520000/2424200424335057/?type=3>.

⁸ Academia Christiana on Facebook, August 24, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/AcademiaChristiana/photos/pb.100064559837295.-2207520000/1455001454588297/?type=3>.

⁹ The following web presences of Academia Christiana were consulted: <https://www.academiachristiana.org/en> (official website); <https://www.facebook.com/AcademiaChristiana/> (Facebook); <https://twitter.com/AcademiaChristi> (Twitter), <https://www.youtube.com/@AcademiaChristiana> (YouTube), <https://fr.linkedin.com/company/academia-christiana> (LinkedIn).

¹⁰ Academia Christiana, “Don t Just Criticise, Create! : Interview with Victor Aubert.”

events such as “The Thought of the Right,” held in October 2021.¹¹ Particularly pronounced among the AC’s outreach activities is the recourse to figures such as Charles Maurras (1868–1952) of the monarchist and pro-fascist Action Française, known for his profound anti-Semitism, in whose honor AC runs a dedicated reading group.¹²

On its website, AC presents a distinctive assortment of books in line with its ideology, many of which are published by the organization itself. Prominent among the AC publications is *A deeply rooted Catholic adventure (Une aventure catholique et enracinée)* by Victor Aubert.¹³ Julien Langella, AC’s vice president, has contributed two titles: *Remake a people (Refaire un peuple)*, and the heavily promoted *Catholics and Identitarians (Catholiques et identitaires)*, a guiding text of the organization, with a preface by Guillaume de Tanoüarn of the Institute of the Good Shepherd.¹⁴ Among the books distributed by AC is *L’Alvarium* by Jean-Eudes Gannat, which describes the history of the eponymous militant neofascist group that was banned in 2021.¹⁵

Some of AC’s titles are part of a book series published in collaboration with La Nouvelle Librairie, a notorious Parisian far-right bookstore and publishing house. La Nouvelle Librairie, founded by François Bousquet in July 2018, situated at 11 rue de Médicis in the 6th arrondissement of Paris, was previously the home of the Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, which has served as the bookstore for the Action Française since 1900. It was initially led by Georges Valois (1878–1945), the founder of Le Faisceau and a supporter of Italian fascism.

La Nouvelle Librairie’s Academia Christiana series notably features two books with titles that pay homage to *A Generation in the Storm (Une génération dans l’orage)*, a book written by the Action française ideologue Robert Brasillach (1909–1945) who was executed for his collaboration with the Nazis.¹⁶ One of them, *Breviary for a Generation in the Storm*, collects chapters by far-right ideologues from the dawn of fascism to today, including José Antonio Primo de Rivera, Charles Maurras, Alain de Benoist, Martin Heidegger, and Dominique Venner, as well as AC mainstays such as Victor Aubert, Julien Langella and Louis-Marie de Blignières.

That curious amalgamation of fascist, monarchist, Catholic fundamentalist, and neo-pagan influences is also reflected in AC’s aesthetics. At gatherings, the presence of various monarchist banners catches

¹¹ Academia Christiana on Facebook, October 23, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/AcademiaChristiana/photos/pb.100064559837295.-2207520000/4529733430448402/?type=3>.

¹² “Cercle de Lecture Sur La Doctrine de Charles Maurras,” November 7, 2022, Academia Christiana on Facebook, accessed January 17, 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/AcademiaChristiana/photos/pb.100064559837295.-2207520000/5704193646335702/?type=3>.

¹³ Victor Aubert, *Une aventure catholique et enracinée*, Academia Christiana series (Paris: La Nouvelle Librairie éditions, 2023).

¹⁴ Julien Langella, *Refaire un peuple* (Paris: La Nouvelle Librairie éditions, 2021); Julien Langella and Guillaume de Tanoüarn, *Catholiques et identitaires. De la Manif pour tous à la reconquête* (Poitiers: DMM Editeur, 2017).

¹⁵ “Why Alvarium? From an Anti-Natural Policy to Secession,” Academia Christiana, accessed January 19, 2023, <https://www.academiachristiana.org/en/product-page/pourquoi-l-alvarium-d-une-politique-antinaturelle-à-la-sécession>.

¹⁶ *Programme politique d une génération dans l orage*, preface by Jean-Eudes Gannat, Academia Christiana series (Paris: La Nouvelle Librairie éditions, 2022). The authors of the book include: Jean-Eudes Gannat, Victor Aubert, Thibaud Gibelin, Guillaume Travers, Anne Trewby, Guillaume Bernard, Jean-Yves Le Gallou, Dr. Michel Pareti, and Anne Brassié; *Bréviaire pour Une génération dans l’orage* (Academia Christiana, undated).

the eye, which include regional, pre-Republican emblems and flags.¹⁷ They often sport variations of the fleur-de-lis, the coat-of-arms of the House of Bourbon, which is also present in the Action Française logo. However, there are distinctly völkisch aesthetics present as well, stretching from depictions of dances around bonfires during heathen celebrations to branded memes of belligerent white maidens sacrificing themselves for their family and nation.¹⁸ Gender stereotypes are constantly reinforced through AC's online propaganda, promoting a traditional family model whereby women should focus on the family and child-rearing.

Of the various far-right tendencies present in AC, the Catholic and neo-medievalist imprimaturs are the most pronounced. Exemplary are the numerous positive references to the Reconquista (ca. 722–1492), one of the most brutal chapters of Catholic history: a period of almost 800 years during which Christians battled Muslims on the Iberian peninsula, resulting in the forced conversion, killing and expulsion of both Muslims and Jews, only to be followed by the plundering of Central and South America and the massacre of its native populations. AC commemorates the Reconquista in its logo, which consists of the St. James's Cross against the background of a mountain with sun beams radiating from its peak. The origin of that specific cross is attributed to St. James the Greater whose mythical intervention in the 844 Battle of Clavijo is credited with the victory over the Moors. The Reconquista concept has been adopted by other far-right forces in France and beyond. It is worth noting that Reconquête is the name of a French far-right party which was established in late 2021 by Éric Zemmour, whom AC supported during the 2022 French presidential election.¹⁹

Academia Christiana's clerics

In its medievalist vision of forming a new generation of crusaders, AC is guided by a group of Catholic fundamentalist clerics who give lectures in Catholic doctrine, conduct masses, and perform religious services, such as hearing confessions by AC members.²⁰ These priests largely hail from three fraternities: the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter, the Institute of the Good Shepherd and, to a lesser extent, the Fraternity of Saint-Vincent-Ferrier.²¹ All three belong to a far-right segment within the

¹⁷ Academia Christiana on Facebook, August 9, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/AcademiaChristiana/photos/pb.100064559837295.-2207520000/4292988157456265/?type=3>.

¹⁸ Academia Christiana on Facebook, June 14, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/AcademiaChristiana/photos/pb.100064559837295.-2207520000/5282892111799193/?type=3>; Academia Christiana on Facebook, April 16, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/AcademiaChristiana/photos/pb.100064559837295.-2207520000/2935514319870329/?type=3>.

¹⁹ Antony Paone and Leigh Thomas, "Far-right French Presidential Hopeful Promises 'reconquest' at Rally," Reuters, December 6, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/far-right-french-presidential-hopeful-promises-reconquest-rally-2021-12-05/>; Alexandre Ballario, "Academia Christiana, bastion de la fachosphère catholique," Éditions Golias, February 25, 2022, <https://www.golias-editions.fr/2022/02/25/academia-christiana-bastion-de-la-fachosphere-catholique/>.

²⁰ "Billetterie: Academia Christiana 2018 - Université d'été catholique," Academia Christiana on Weezevent, accessed January 17, 2024, <https://www.weezevent.com/academia-christiana-2018-universite-d-ete-catholique>.

²¹ The ten clerics listed on a previous version of the AC website include: Bishop Laszlo Kiss-Rigo (Hungary); Guillaume de Tanoüarn (IBP); Louis-Marie de Blignières (Fraternity of Saint-Vincent-Ferrier, Dominican); Thierry-Dominique Humbrecht (Dominican); Matthieu Raffray (IBP); Olivier de Nedde (FSSP, Bordeaux); Vincent Baumann (FSSP, then IBP); Nicolas Télisson (FSSP, district of France); Vincent Ribeton (FSSP Seminary Rector, Wigratzbad, Germany); Charles Gauthey (priest, FSSP, district of France). See: Academia Christiana, "Intervenants."

Catholic Church which refuses to accept the ecclesiastical and, particularly, the liturgical reforms adopted after the Second Vatican Council. Indicatively, some AC clergymen can be seen wearing the pre-conciliar seminarian attire, such as Matthieu Raffray (IBP), Olivier de Nedde (FSSP), and Vincent Baumann (FSSP).

These figures persist in observing the so-called Latin Rite or Roman Rite, of which AC director Victor Aubert is a staunch follower. That includes the performance of the so-called Traditional Latin Mass (also called Tridentine Mass), which is the preferred liturgy at AC events. In contrast to most modern Catholic masses, it is held in Latin with the priests turning their back to the congregation while performing the litany. Sidelined during the course of Vatican II, the Tridentine mass became a rallying point for the far-right fringe of the Catholic church, kicking off the so-called “liturgy wars,” the tug-of-war around the question of what the official Catholic liturgy should be. While the previous Pope Benedict XVI had been favorable toward the Latin Mass, Pope Francis (2013-present) has made several attempts to curb its growing influence.²² By doing so, he has become the *bête noire* of many Catholic reactionaries, including those affiliated with AC. Just recently, numerous French and international “Catholic lay leaders” have co-signed an open letter that denounces Pope Francis’ attempt to eliminate the Tridentine mass.²³ Among the priests who have conducted Latin Masses for the AC cadre are Nicolas Télisson (FSSP) and Charles Gauthey (FSSP).²⁴

One of the earliest and most consequential of the groups which rejected the post-Vatican II reforms was the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX), of which the FSSP and the IBP are direct offshoots. The Fraternité Sacerdotale Saint-Pierre emerged immediately after the so-called *Écône* consecrations when in 1988 several SSPX leaders were excommunicated after they had ordained a group of bishops against the explicit order of the Vatican. As the SSPX had been an extra-canonical organization since 1975, and fearful of further repercussions, the FSSP emerged with the aim of creating a canonical organization recognized by the Vatican. Shortly after its establishment in 1988, at the Abbey of Hauterive, near Fribourg, Switzerland, the fraternity, with the assistance of the future pope Benedict XVI, found a home at Wigratzbad, a Bavarian Marian sanctuary. This location now serves as the European seminary for the FSSP. Currently, the fraternity boasts a total of 279 priests and 150 seminarians.²⁵

Besides the FSSP, several AC priests belong to the Institute of the Good Shepherd, established by Father Paul Aulagnier after he was expelled from the SSPX in 2004. Aulagnier was the longtime right-hand man of SSPX founder Marcel Lefebvre. Founded in 2006 in Rome by Aulagnier and other priests, the IBP was authorized by the Vatican under the SSPX-friendly Pope Benedict XVI to practice the

²² Philip Pullella, “Pope Francis Again Turns Screws on Use of Traditional Latin Mass,” Reuters, February 21, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/pope-francis-again-turns-screws-use-traditional-latin-mass-2023-02-21/>.

²³ “We Will Not Deprive Our Children: International Group of Catholic Lay Leaders Call for Revocation of Traditionis Custodes,” The Remnant Newspaper, September 8, 2021, <https://remnantnewspaper.com/web/index.php/articles/item/5575-we-will-not-deprive-our-children-international-group-of-catholic-lay-leaders-call-for-revocation-of-traditionis-custodes>.

²⁴ Academia Christiana on Weezevent, “Billetterie : Academia Christiana 2018 - Université d’été catholique”; Henri de Villiers, “Première messe de M. l Abbé Charles Gauthey, FSSP, à la cathédrale d Autun,” Schola Sainte Cecile, July 6, 2013, <https://schola-sainte-cecile.com/2013/07/06/premiere-messe-de-m-labbe-charles-gauthey-fssp-a-la-cathedrale-dautun/>.

²⁵ “La Fraternité Sacerdotale Saint-Pierre,” La Fraternité Sacerdotale Saint-Pierre à Bourges, accessed January 17, 2024, <https://fsspbourges.fr/qui-sommes-nous/la-fraternite-saint-pierre/>.

Latin Rite, and has remained a vocal critic of the Vatican II reforms ever since.²⁶ Aulagnier has made no secret of his continued SSPX affinities.²⁷ The IBP's mother house is the 12th-century church Saint-Éloi in Bordeaux, established as a personal parish by the Archbishop of Bordeaux in 2007 and entrusted to the Institute. Among the IBP priests most involved in AC is Guillaume de Tanoüarn, a well-known figure in the French Catholic Right who has appeared as speaker at numerous AC events. A particularly combative AC priest is Fr. Matthieu Raffray, a resident in Rome who serves as the assistant to the Superior General of the IBP.²⁸ Raffray frequently showcases his fondness for weapons on social media, where he has posed on different occasions with rifles, a saber, and boxing gloves.²⁹

While the footprint of the FSSP and the IBP is striking, there is a third fraternity involved in AC, the renegade Dominican Fraternity of Saint-Vincent-Ferrier (FSVF), whose founder, Louis-Marie de Blignières, holds a prominent position in AC. Blignières, born in 1949 in Madrid, was ordained by none other than the SSPX founder Marcel Lefebvre, although he ultimately disassociated from him in 1988 after the SSPX started to ordain bishops. In 1979, four years after the SSPX was declared non-canonical by the Vatican, Blignières founded the FSVF and is currently its prior. The FSVF is a Catholic fundamentalist community of Dominican inspiration but is not affiliated with the order. Blignières has continued to adhere to extreme traditionalist Catholic positions such as sedevacantism, a position that claims all popes since Pius XII are not valid since they espoused the "heresies" of Vatican II.

Academia Christiana and the Extreme Right

Besides the aforementioned Catholic fundamentalist fraternities, AC collaborates with a whole range of affiliated far-right organizations. One of the AC's foremost partners is the leading far-right journal *The European Conservative* (TEC), tacitly affiliated with the European Conservative and Reformist group and party in the European Parliament, whose editorial board includes key figures within the Catholic Right. AC has co-hosted events with TEC and has also advertised in the journal. Among the regular TEC participants in AC's events is the revisionist Belgian-German historian David Engels, who holds a senior editorial position at the journal.³⁰ Engels himself runs the Oswald Spengler Society, which in the past has granted its €10,000 award to notorious far-right celebrities such as Michel Houellebecq and Jordan Peterson.³¹

²⁶ "Notre charisme," Institut du Bon Pasteur, accessed January 5, 2024, <https://www.institutdubonpasteur.org/decouvrir-linstitut/notre-charisme/>.

²⁷ For example, in 2013, Aulagnier published a book in Portuguese through the Montfort Cultural Association defending Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and his traditionalist claims. See: "A Herança Doutrinária de D. Marcel Lefebvre," Livraria Montfort, accessed January 5, 2024, <https://www.livrariamontfort.com.br/a-heranca-doutrinaria-de-d-marcel-lefebvre>.

²⁸ "Our Priests," Institute of the Good Shepherd, accessed January 17, 2024, <https://www.instituteofthegoodshepherd.org/our-priests>.

²⁹ "#bagarrebagarrepriere: l abbé Raffray, la bible et le fusil," La Horde, November 18, 2021, <https://lahorde.samizdat.net/bagarrebagarrepriere-l-abbe-Raffray-la-bible-et-le-fusil>.

³⁰ For example: "Engels: Effondrement Civilisationnel et Christianisme. Interview Avec l Academia Christiana. 1.4.22," David Engels on YouTube, April 9, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbYCvbgGL4Y>; "Civilisation, Renouveau et Spiritualité - David Engels," Academia Christiana on YouTube, July 23, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EhHbedcd8hk>.

³¹ Axel Rütth, Houellebecq & Spengler: Gebärmütter als Hoffnung für das Abendland," welt.de, 21 October 2018, <https://www.welt.de/kultur/literarischewelt/article182459000/Houellebecq-Spengler-Gebaermuetter-als-Hoffnung-fuer-das-Abendland.html>; "Conference 2022: 'Myth, Fate and Duty. Oswald Spengler and Jordan Peterson as Moral Philosophers.' Award of the 'Oswald Spengler Prize' to Prof. Dr. Jordan

TEC's history dates back to 2008 when it was the newsletter of the Center for European Renewal. It eventually demerged and since 2021 appears in a revamped edition published in Hungary. TEC is published in collaboration with other likeminded organizations across Europe, including the Berlin-based Library of Conservatism (Bibliothek des Konservatismus, Bdk), a far-right think tank and library, and Nazione Futura, an Italian think tank and journal affiliated with the far-right Fratelli d'Italia party.³² Besides AC, TEC maintains close ties with other organizations such as the Institut Iliade in Paris, which lists TEC as partner on its website—an organization with which AC also collaborates.

The Iliade Institute was allegedly founded during the summer solstice of 2014 atop Mount Olympus, in response to the final wishes of Dominique Venner.³³ Venner, who can be considered one of the most influential far-right ideologues in France over the past few decades, symbolically took his own life in 2013 at Notre-Dame Cathedral, with the intention of “warning about the perceived dangers of the ‘great replacement.’”³⁴ Jean-Yves Le Gallou, the co-founder of the Iliade Institute, is also among the AC lecturers. Le Gallou was formerly a high-ranking member of the Front National and was a trusted associate of Bruno Mégret.³⁵ He previously held prominent positions within the Club de l'Horloge as well as the influential New Right think tank GRECE.

Although its roots are in the Nouvelle Droite, the Iliade Institute embodies a significant shift in the movement's previous tenets regarding Christianity. While the New Right hitherto embraced a largely anti-Christian and neo-pagan ideology, the Iliade Institute attempts to fuse the two, and as such, explicitly shares AC's objective of amalgamating Catholic fundamentalists with militant neo-fascist elements into a joint Catholic Identitarian movement. Bastien Frimas, the spokesperson for Iliade, framed that mission as follows:

The New Right, radically anti-egalitarian and anti-universalist, nourished by Nietzsche, sometimes violently attacked Christianity. We are still anti-egalitarian, anti-universalist and Nietzsche remains a reference, but we no longer carry this anti-Christian discourse for two reasons: firstly, we give Christianity its rightful place in the history of our civilisation ... Secondly, we see clearly, and they do too, that we are much closer to identitarian Christians or traditionalist Catholics than we are to any liberal. Spiritual antagonism is fading, especially among the younger generation, in favour of a common struggle for the preservation of our civilisation. Our close relation with the traditionnalist [sic] youth movement Academia Christiana embodies that. ... our manifesto is both in direct line with the GRECE manifesto and a new, lucid, pragmatic vision of current challenges with actualized proposals to face our enemies [sic], to resist the decadence and surge again, true to who we are as Europeans.³⁶

Peterson,” Oswald Spengler Society, 2022, <https://www.oswaldspenglersociety.com/kopie-von-conference-2020>.

³² “Impressum,” The European Conservative, accessed January 31, 2024, <https://europeanconservative.com/impressum/>.

³³ “Création de l Institut Charles Quint en Espagne,” Institut Iliade, March 25, 2023, <https://institut-iliade.com/creation-de-linstitut-charles-quint-en-espagne/>.

³⁴ Nicolas Massol, “Au Rassemblement national, le retour des vieux réseaux de la Nouvelle Droite,” Libération, May 26, 2023, https://www.liberation.fr/politique/elections/au-rassemblement-national-le-retour-des-vieux-reseaux-de-la-nouvelle-droite-20230526_H3GZO7ANIJAUZHTEBA2JKPHQ3E/.

³⁵ Massol, “Au Rassemblement national, le retour des vieux réseaux de la Nouvelle Droite.”

³⁶ “Iliade Institute: »We are an updated New Right«,” Tradicija Proti Tiraniji, November 25, 2022, <https://tradicijaprotitiraniji.org/2022/11/25/iliade-institute-we-are-an-updated-new-right/>.

AC also works in close collaboration with supporters of the Groupe Union Défense (GUD, 1969-present) and its various sub-cells, arguably the largest and most important militant far-right group in France. In order to avert prohibition, since the early 1980s GUD has resorted to creating sub-groups under different names rather than appearing as a single organization. AC has developed ties with several of the later GUD-offshoots, notably Bastion Social (Social Bastion), as photographs on AC's Facebook page show.³⁷ Formed in 2017 by former GUD members, Bastion Social was subsequently banned in 2019 due to the numerous instances of racist assaults carried out by its members.³⁸

Besides Bastion Social, AC has shown support for another banned group connected to the GUD, known as L'Alvarium. The programmatic booklet authored by the group's founder, Jean-Eudes Gannat, is still available for purchase on AC's web store, and Gannat appears frequently on AC conferences and in video interviews.³⁹ Founded in 2017, L'Alvarium gained notoriety in 2018 for unlawfully occupying a building and engaging in numerous violent and racist incidents. The French Government dissolved the organization in 2021 for promoting racial hatred and participating in acts of violence.⁴⁰ However, L'Alvarium continues its activities despite its dissolution.

The founder of L'Alvarium, Jean-Eudes Gannat, is a youthful neofascist figurehead, who had previously been associated with the far-right Front National, and who ran as a candidate for the party in 2014 and 2015.⁴¹ He is the son of Pascal Gannat, a former regional advisor and former chief of staff to Jean-Marie Le Pen. Prior to founding L'Alvarium, Jean-Eudes Gannat developed ties to several notorious GUD figures. For example, he held the position of North-West manager at Frédéric Chatillon's Riwal company, which is considered the heart of the "GUD connection."⁴² Besides L'Alvarium, Gannat leads other militant neofascist groups, including the GUD-affiliated Rassemblement des étudiants de droite (2012-present) and the Chouan Movement (2023-present).⁴³

³⁷ Academia Christiana on Facebook, March 18, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/AcademiaChristiana/photos/pb.100064559837295.-2207520000/1636184376470003/?type=3>.

³⁸ Marine Turchi and Matthieu Suc, *La dissolution du Bastion social était déjà engagée depuis deux mois*, Mediapart, February 21, 2019, <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/210219/la-dissolution-du-bastion-social-etait-deja-engagee-depuis-deux-mois>.

³⁹ *Why Alvarium? From an Anti-Natural Policy to Secession*, Academia Christiana, accessed January 17, 2024, <https://www.academiachristiana.org/en/product-page/pourquoi-l-alvarium-d-une-politique-antinaturelle-a-la-secession>.

⁴⁰ Yves Tréca-Durand, *Ultradroite : L'Alvarium menacé de dissolution par Gérald Darmanin*, *Le Monde*, October 29, 2021, https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2021/10/29/ultradroite-un-bar-d-angers-menace-de-dissolution-par-gerald-darmanin_6100388_823448.html.

⁴¹ Matthieu Suc, Marine Turchi, and Sébastien Bourdon, *Dissous, le Bastion social se reconstitue sous de nouvelles identités*, Mediapart, accessed January 17, 2024, <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/181120/dissous-le-bastion-social-se-reconstitue-sous-de-nouvelles-identites>.

⁴² Josué Jean-Bart, *Où est parti l'argent de la vidéosurveillance douteuse d'un identitaire angevin ?*, *Ouest France*, October 17, 2020, <https://www.ouest-france.fr/politique/affaires/info-ouest-france-ou-est-parti-l-argent-de-la-videosurveillance-douteuse-d-un-identitaire-angevin-7018814>.

⁴³ *Rassemblement des Étudiants de Droite - Angers* on Facebook, accessed January 19, 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/ANGERS.RED/>; Jean-Eudes Gannat (Mouvement Chouan) après l'action sur les luttes sociales : « Notre collectif a vocation à mener une guérilla politique » [Interview], *Breizh-Info*, April 2, 2023, <https://www.breizh-info.com/2023/04/02/217826/jean-eudes-gannat-mouvement-chouan-apres-l-action-sur-les-luttes-sociales-notre-collectif-a-vocation-a-mener-une-guerilla-politique-interview/>.

AC has regularly co-hosted events as a means of tying its various affiliates closer together and of gathering and mobilizing a larger base of supporters. For example, AC co-hosted an event titled “Secession or Reconquest” (*Sécession ou reconquête*) on November 5, 2022, in Paris, which was organized together with *The European Conservative*, the Iliade Institute, La Nouvelle Librairie, Breizh.info, TVLibertés, and Le Nouveau Présent Hebdo.⁴⁴ The speakers notably included AC’s vice president Julien Langella as well as AC mainstays such as FSSP priest Olivier de Nedde, David Engels (TEC; Oswald Spengler Society), and Jean-Eudes Gannat (L’Alvarium, Chouan Movement, etc.).

Conclusion

AC’s extensive affiliate structure shows that it is just one among a proliferating network of militant Catholic Right organizations in France and beyond. The fusion of Christian fundamentalist and militant neofascist elements among some of them indicates a rapprochement between two hitherto largely separate constituencies, and the potential to form a larger and more unified movement. In the case of Academia Christiana, the French government seems to have recognized the danger that emanates from that unholy alliance. Nonetheless, as one runs up the tree, it becomes clear that AC is only one of the heads of a much bigger hydra at play, some of which will be explored in a follow-up piece detailing the sprawling reemergence of various GUD structures.

⁴⁴ The European Conservative, Facebook, October 24, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/TheEuroCon/photos/pb.100063572966908.-2207520000./3405553349729884/?type=3>.